

EASTERN HOPHORNBEAM

Ostrya virginiana (Mill.) K. Koch.

OTHER COMMON NAMES: American hophornbeam, Hornbeam, Ironwood.

FORM: Usually 20-40 feet high with a short trunk 8-15 inches in diameter, occasionally 70 feet tall with a diameter of 2 feet; crown rather high, open, broad round-topped, formed by widely spreading, often drooping, branches with ascending branchlets.

BARK: Grayish-brown, thin, roughened by flattish scales which are loose at the end and give a shreddy appearance to the bole.

TWIGS: At first slender, hairy, green, later smooth, lustrous, dark brown.

LEAVES: Alternate, simple, ovate-oblong to ovate-lanceolate, 3-5 inches long, 1 1/2-2 inches wide, acuminate or acute at the apex, rounded or cordate and inequilateral at the base, finely doubly serrate.

FLOWERS: Appear with leaves, monoecious, in aments; staminate aments preformed preceding season in about threes at end of twigs, about 2 inches long in the spring; pistillate flowers in erect aments, each enclosed in a hairy bladder-like bract.

FRUIT: A long, pendulous, creamy-white, cone-like body 1 1/2-2 1/2 inches long, 2/3-1 inch wide, consisting of bladder-like involucre forming a hop-like fruit; fruiting involucre 3/4 inch long, stiff, stinging hairs at base, enclosing a flattened, chestnut-brown nutlet.

WINTER BUDS: Alternate, ovate, 1/4 inch long, sharp-pointed, divergent, slightly pubescent, gummy, covered with 8 visible, longitudinally striated, 4-ranked scales; terminal bud absent.

WOOD: Very heavy, hard, strong, tough, close-grained, light brown, reddish-brown or nearly white, with thick pale white sapwood.

USES: Tool handles, fuel.

HABITAT: Dry, gravelly, and stony soils, occasionally moist situations.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS: Hop-like fruit; grayish-brown bark peels in narrow flat scales; 2-ranked leaf scars with 3-bundle scars; hardness of wood.

DISTRIBUTION IN ALABAMA: Fairly well distributed over the state.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. A flowering branch | 9. A fruiting branch |
| 2. A scale of the staminate ament, rear view | 10. A fruiting involucre |
| 3. A staminate flower with its scale, front view | 11. Vertical section of a fruiting involucre, showing the nut |
| 4. A stamen | 12. Vertical section of a nut |
| 5. Diagram of a pistillate flower | 13. A seed |
| 6. Pistillate flower | 14. An embryo |
| 7. A pistillate flower enclosed in its bract and bractlets | 15. A winter branch with staminate aments |
| 8. A pistillate flower with its bract and bractlets laid open | 16. A leaf scar |



Ostrya virginiana (Mill.) K. Koch.